



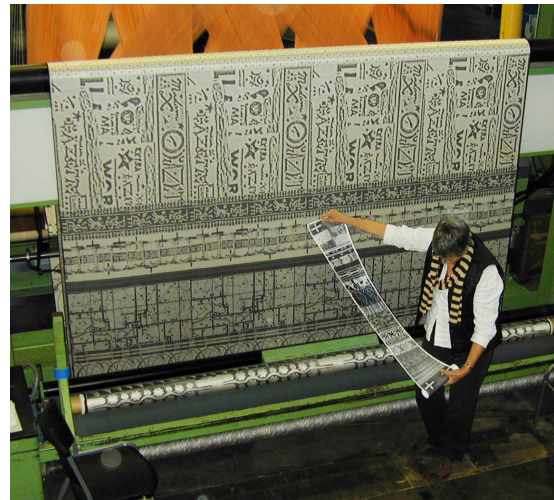
SMA

 GALLERY HOURS
10 AM–4 PM Tue, Fri & Sat
10 AM–8 PM Wed & Thu
NOON–4 PM Sun
CLOSED MONDAYS

 785.864.4710
spencerart@ku.edu
www.spencerart.ku.edu

 ADA compliant

Spencer Museum of Art
The University of Kansas
1301 Mississippi Street
Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7595
FREE ADMISSION



Ann Hamilton / Cynthia Schira
an errant line

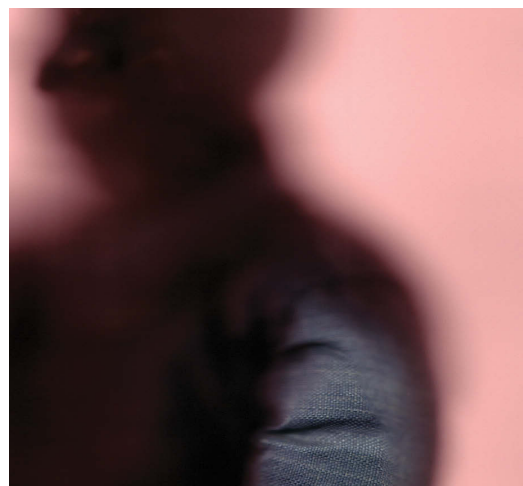
An Errant Line is supported by Art Works grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Additional support comes from Emprise Financial Corporation, Linda Bailey, Dave & Gunda Hiebert, the Kress Foundation Department of Art History, the department of Visual Art, and the Loomis family.



SPENCER
MUSEUM OF ART

March 2 – August 11, 2013





an errant line

represents a mutual engagement with cloth that artists Ann Hamilton and Cynthia Schira have had over several decades. In response to an invitation from the Spencer Museum of Art, they have mined its encyclopedic holdings to create new works of art for the Central Court and adjoining galleries. The results reflect their distinctive contemplations of the Museum's legacy of collection, exhibition and preservation, as well as the relation of the handmade to a world increasingly structured by the digital code of zeros and ones.

The exhibition title is inspired by a weaving technique using a supplementary weft, which has long been a unique element in the development of Schira's practice and one which she passed, significantly, to Hamilton, her student in the

late 1970s. In a cloth woven with two horizontal weft threads, one thread can float free of the cloth's ground to introduce another pattern, often decorative, over the surface while the other thread maintains the integrity of the woven structure. The technique introduces flexibility and improvisatory possibility and can be a linear sign of the weaver's autonomy, further embellishing the cloth but also freeing it from the grid imposed by a loom's fundamental organization of a horizontal and a vertical thread. For Schira and Hamilton, the technique extends beyond the cloth's surface to articulate a way of thinking about the relationship of part to whole, field to line, chaos to order. They have chosen to call their path through the collection "an errant line."

As they delved into the extensive textile collection, related pattern books, and objects recently integrated from Spooner Hall, they each considered how unique access to these pieces might guide their questions and become material in their own processes—and how, in turn, the collection might be animated by observation and by being put to new uses, poetic and unexpected. What you see in these galleries is the result of their exploration. Hamilton's prints fill the Museum's Central Court with the haunting presence of the Spencer's 18th-century Italian Presepio figures. In a large adjacent gallery, Schira's labyrinth of monumental black-and-white textiles draws its imagery from prints and paintings in the Spencer's collections.

The installations are linked to one another, and to the legacy of cloth production, as

they explore and exploit, historically and metaphorically, the reciprocal relationship between weaving and today's ubiquitous digital encoding of nearly everything. Schira uses abstracted digital elements woven on computer-controlled looms, and Hamilton creates ghostly images of dimensional objects seen through the eyes of an obsolete flatbed scanner. Just as the Jacquard loom, invented in 1800, pointed toward the first mechanical computer, so the modern computer, with its screen acting as a membrane between the user and another realm, points back to the loom, to clothing, to products of thread. Like clothing, it acts as a second skin separating our bodies from the world. These conceptual connections between cloth and the computer era are manifest in *An Errant Line*.

Schira's installation features sheer, woven, and mesh fabrics. It includes a monumental "word" cloth and *ETYMON*, woven on a computer-controlled Jacquard loom at the Oriole Mill, abstracted from selections obtained from the Spencer's online collection database. Working with computer files in her studio, Schira layers the fragments and patterns she has culled and transfers the files into a CAD (computer-aided design) program that allows her to input instructions to drive the loom. Just as *ETYMON* begins with images, other weavings in her installation begin with words. Her enormous word cloth inventively catalogues multiple ways that textiles can be described.

Similar disjunctions in scale, from the tiny to the monumental, occur in Ann Hamilton's

work, which renders the miniature gigantic. A grand piano is shrouded, awaiting the touch of the hand to sound and play scales or songs that might serenade the silent figures on the walls. The figures, for their part, are transformed by how the scanner "sees." Only the parts that actually touch the scanner's glass bed appear in focus; the rest retreats into blur. Enlarged and digitally printed on Japanese Gampi paper bonded to cheesecloth, the scans show free-standing single figures, peasants and noblewomen originally made for Presepio (or nativity) scenes: the profane attends to the sacred. As the individual figures are removed from the nativity ensemble, the grand narrative recedes and disassembles, leaving only puppets in a gestural drama. Clothed in garments perfectly scaled to their small size, these figures motion to one another across the space, reflecting Hamilton's ongoing interest in the relationship between the visual and the tactile.

In response to the artists' work, throughout the run of the exhibition, dancers, musicians, poets, and students are invited to respond to Hamilton and Schira's coded notations, adapting them to musical, theatrical, and literary dimensions.

Organized by SMA curator Susan Earle, *An Errant Line* is open from March 2–August 11, 2013. A schedule of performances and other events that accompany the exhibition is available at www.spencerart.ku.edu. A multi-author book documenting the project will be published this spring.

